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Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable JOHN E. SUNUNU, a Senator from the State of New Hampshire.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Almighty God, You know all about us. You know when we sit down and when we rise up. Forgive our past blindness to the grandeur and glory of Your unfolding providence. Thank You for the gift of a freedom to choose and give us the courage to change our minds when it is needed.

Bring our hearts under Your control as You infuse within us a deeper love for You. We pray for our world—the lands we know but also those other lands that stand within our minds as nothing more than names. May we never forget that You have children in every land. Use our Senators today to bring life and not death—peace and not war. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable JOHN E. SUNUNU led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. STEVENS).

The assistant Journal clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,

PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,

Washington, DC, February 26, 2004.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby

appoint the Honorable JOHN E. SUNUNU, a Senator from the State of New Hampshire, to perform the duties of the Chair.

TED STEVENS,

President pro tempore.

Mr. SUNUNU thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, this morning the Senate will resume consideration of S. 1805, the gun liability bill. A unanimous consent agreement worked out by the managers last night means we will definitely make significant progress on a number of issues throughout the day, and we will complete action on the bill on Tuesday. Senators should be aware the agreement covers amendments to be offered today and on Tuesday, but we do expect additional amendments to be offered and voted on tomorrow and during Monday's session of the Senate. Those Senators who are not covered by the agreement should work with Senators CRAIG and REED of Rhode Island to work through their amendments before Tuesday morning.

The first vote of the day should occur between 10:30 a.m. and 11:30 a.m. Members will be notified of rollcall votes throughout the day and possibly into the evening.

I wish to use a few moments of leadership time to comment on the bill. We will proceed right on the bill. It is going to be a fast-paced day. An agreement was worked out last night. I think we have a good game plan. We will finish the bill on Tuesday and we will start right in.

The bill, S. 1805, has broad bipartisan support. We will be considering a lot of

amendments. We will debate those amendments, and we have the time agreements to see that they are considered fairly. This bill is bipartisan, with 10 Senators from the Democratic side of the aisle supporting it. The bill also has 45 Republican cosponsors. I know we can move quickly and process these amendments and move toward final passage of this important legislation.

There is a common misconception that the gun industry is a large and powerful industry, and it is simply not. In fact, the firearms trade is a relatively small industry. In 1999, the industry collectively made less than \$200 million in total profits—just \$200 million. To put that in perspective, Home Depot, a company with which we are all familiar, netted \$4.3 billion in 2003. That one company made more than 20 times the profit of the entire firearms business.

In 2003, Wal-Mart, a highly competitive retail chain, profited a hefty \$9 billion. And if we look at a chain such as Starbucks, even Starbucks sees bigger profits than the American firearms manufacturers.

I mention that because the issue is not of size or relative size. The real issue is that the gun manufacturing industry employs people with productive jobs, well-intentioned, well-meaning, good jobs. These are valuable jobs, and most of these jobs actually are in rural communities. Those are the communities that, in many ways, need jobs the most in this day and time.

Often, these gun manufacturers are the largest employer in these small communities and, as a consequence, these ruinous lawsuits do not just threaten the manufacturers; they end up threatening the whole town, the whole community itself.

Still, we have the antigun crusaders who insist that the firearms business, one of the most regulated industries in America today, must be brought to heel. Why? They believe the gun manufacturers themselves should be responsible for the criminal actions of other

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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